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## **City, County considering options to reduce NEI flow while repairs being made**

Officials with the City of Wilmington and New Hanover County have drawn up a list of options to help reduce the amount of wastewater flowing through the troubled Northeast Interceptor (NEI) force main. One of the main options is entering into a contract with the state Division of Water Quality that would make the city accountable for getting needed repairs done or face steep fines.

These options will be presented to the area's state legislative delegation on Thursday during a meeting with elected officials from the city, county and Wrightsville Beach. The meeting will be held at 4 p.m. at the old County Courthouse at the corner of 3<sup>rd</sup> and Princess streets.

The options being considered are not yet finalized or complete – the elected officials from the city and county would have to take a formal vote before implementation could begin. Officials are expected to vote on the options within the next several weeks.

The city, county and Wrightsville Beach all contribute to the wastewater flowing through the NEI, which is nine miles long and runs from Wrightsville Beach to the Southside Treatment Plant on River Road.

Highlights of the options being considered:

- Diverting some wastewater currently flowing through the NEI from the Southside Treatment Plant to the Northside Treatment Plant, which is undergoing a major expansion;
- Entering into a Special Order of Consent (SOC) with the state that would stipulate timelines for completion of repairs, as well as requesting flexibility from the state on how much wastewater could be treated at the Northside plant;
- Initiating efforts to staunch the flow of storm water and ground water that may be contributing to the NEI flow;
- Investigating manholes and pipes to identify areas where ground or storm water may be entering the wastewater system through cracks or holes in sewer pipes or manholes. Holes or cracks can be repaired to staunch the flow of ground or storm water into the system, thereby reducing the flow of wastewater flowing to the Southside Treatment Plant;

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- Allowing building permits and individual connections or “taps” for residential construction to continue, but limiting building permits of commercial construction in the NEI service area to “low flow” projects of 500 gallons or less until capacity at Northside is increased or the NEI improvements are completed;

(NOTE: Broadly defined, a sewer line that connects to a private residence/office building to a sewer main pipe is called a "tap." A pipeline that connects to a sewer main pipe or other system that serves several buildings is called an “extension.” The current state moratorium in place prohibits only extensions, not individual taps.)

- Expanding the moratorium currently in place that prohibits sewer extensions in the NEI service area to include the service area of the Northside treatment plant;
- Lastly, continuing and expanding water conservation efforts and finding ways to gather data to help better manage the flow through the system.

More detailed information can be found on the city’s website at [www.wilmingtonnc.gov](http://www.wilmingtonnc.gov) on the Sewer Improvement Page.